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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000324

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A  
NSC FOR WOOD  
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SUBJECT: SUCCESSFUL WINTER COIN OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. A) 07 KABUL 3724  
    1B. B) 07 KABUL 3884  
    1C. C) KABUL 298

Classified By: ADCM Brent Hartley, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: The rigorous winter in southeastern Afghanistan is traditionally a period of relative inactivity in the conflict with insurgents. However, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Coalition Forces (CF) in the RC-East Task Force Fury area of operations are conducting several operations this winter to exploit the division between the insurgents and local residents created by poor weather and terrain conditions. TF Fury has an active schedule of operations and activities -- most of which will continue for at least the next four to six weeks -- to enhance security, governance and development in Khost, Paktia, Paktika, Logar, and Wardak provinces. The strategy's success is already apparent in increased participation in shuras, greater outreach by provincial officials, more opportunities for governance and development activities, and improved ANSF performance.

Khost: Operation Mattoon Secures Northern Sabari District

¶2. (S) ANSF and CF launched "Operation Mattoon" on December 27, 2007, and have secured the last major stronghold of insurgents in Khost province in the northern half of Sabari district. The Operation will leave Khost province, an emerging example of successful counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy (ref A), almost entirely "green" for security. On December 27, Afghan National Army (ANA) commandos, with CF support, moved into northern Sabari, detained 28 suspected insurgent operatives primarily affiliated with Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), and confiscated scores of weapons. ANSF and CF units entered several villages and the Margah market to conduct search and clear operations, using "soft knock" tactics with Afghan troops. ANSF and CF construction crews moved up the Bak-Sabari road and established a force protection base, a precursor for construction of a District Center.

¶3. (S) Khost Governor Arsala Jamal and PRT Khost initiated a series of community meetings (shuras), during which village elders welcomed the increased ANSF presence. They requested mediation for a tribal dispute that was an underlying reason

for problems in the area. Residents pointed out that many villagers had been neutral in the past because neither the central government nor the insurgents had offered sustained support to the area. The PRT held medical engagements for several hundred residents and initiated projects for a main road, several wells and dams. The provincial government announced the construction of a new district madrassa (Islamic school), part of a GIRoA effort to reinforce balanced religious education.

Paktya: Zormat Operations, Radio Unity Engage Local Population

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¶4. (S) The Zormat area, an unofficial district of Paktia province, is integral to the establishment of a central commerce and development corridor linking Khost, Gardez, Sharana and Ghazni. Zormat has been the site of substantial insurgent activity. Establishment of a CF Forward Operating Base (FOB) in the district has inspired an increased sense of security among Zormat residents, as witnessed by growing participation in shuras and call-ins against insurgents. The detention of several insurgents led to a decline in IED and indirect fire incidents.

¶5. (S) The Focused District Development (FDD) initiative in Zormat has temporarily substituted the area's Afghan National Police (ANP) unit with a Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) unit. An expanded local ANP force is being re-trained and equipped at the Gardez Regional Training Center. Locals are enthusiastic about the ANCOP force, creating a positive climate for the return of the improved ANP unit in February. Operation National Treasure, initiated on January 20, is pressuring locally-based insurgents in

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Zormat through the presence of ANSF/CF teams operating along the area's main roads and in remote villages. Locals appear increasingly willing to interact with GIRoA and ANSF/CF, with shura participation increasing and GIRoA officials -- including the Zormat district administrator, until recently barricaded in his office -- traveling freely with the PRT to assess needs and initiate projects.

¶6. (S) These activities have been augmented by Radio Unity, a "radio in a box" portable transmitter located at FOB Zormat that airs several hours of FM programming daily, mixing entertainment with public service announcements, listener participation programs, and pro-GIRoA messages. The station has proved highly popular, generating hundreds of positive letters and on-air calls, including one indignant call from an insurgent leader protesting the reward offered on the station for his capture.

Paktika: Operation Winter Stand Reaches Remote Communities

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¶7. (S) In Operation Winter Stand in Paktika, TF Fury and ANSF units are maintaining a presence through the winter in remote areas of the province, some of which CF and ANSF cleared of insurgent strongholds in autumn 2007 (ref B). In Charbaran, Naka and Rabat districts, CF and ANSF units are reinforcing district centers, manning observation posts, conducting patrols and distributing humanitarian aid in areas that coalition and insurgent forces have historically ignored during the harsh winter months. ANSF and CF are sponsoring shuras in isolated villages, recruiting for ANA and ANP, and distributing humanitarian assistance and other items, including popular hand-cranked radios. The local maneuver battalion's "Embrace Islam" project has refurbished local mosques and distributed Korans.

¶8. (S) The engagement with some of Paktika's most isolated communities runs parallel to Paktika Governor Khpalwak's ongoing efforts to improve government interaction in the province. Governor Khpalwak organized a "super shura" of hundreds of provincial elders and elected officials in late January to discuss provincial challenges and recommend

solutions to the central government (ref C).

Logar and Wardak: Operation Clean Sweep Extends Security  
Near Kabul

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¶9. (S) Operation Clean Sweep, which began on January 14, will disrupt insurgent cells in the Tangi-Wardak Valley in Logar and Wardak provinces along the major routes from eastern Afghanistan to Kabul. TF Fury has conducted patrols and medical and humanitarian activities and has held a series of shuras between CF and elders in Pul-i Alam, Charka, Kherwar, Jaghato and Chak districts. Operation Clean Sweep is TF Fury's first large-scale joint operation with the ANA 201st Corp (most Fury operations are with the 203rd Corps).

¶10. (S) It remains to be seen whether a warm-weather fighting season will materialize in broad form in southeastern Afghanistan. TF Fury's continued activities during the usually-dormant winter months, including military operations and development and governance activities, should set the conditions for local populations to resist the insurgents' intimidation when warmer weather returns. The operations will also limit the insurgents' ability to launch from or seek shelter in areas previously used as support bases and safe havens.

WOOD